THE Crusaders
VOL. 21
J.T.C.
RECOMMENDED READING FOR ADULTS AND TEENS.
BLACK ANGEL

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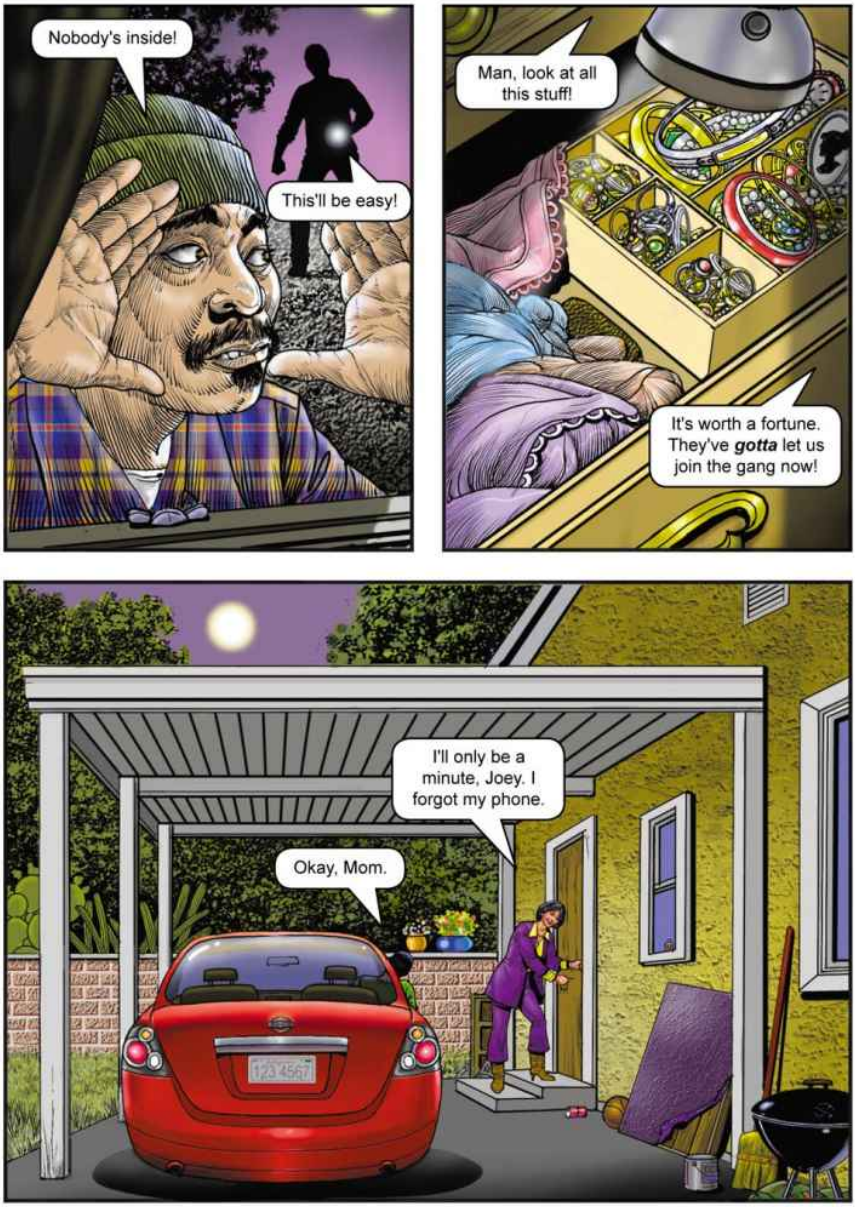
BLACK ANGEL

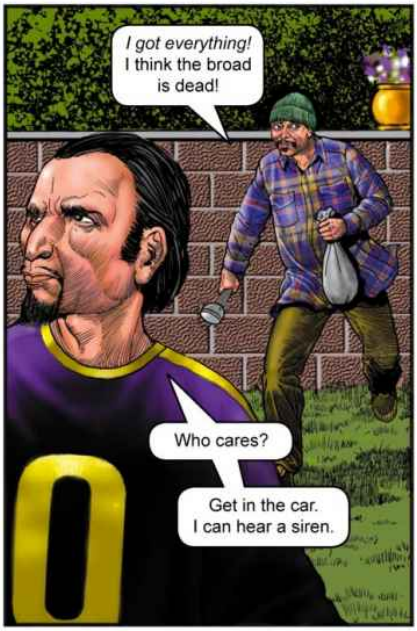

Nobody's inside!
This'll be easy!
Man, look at all this stuff!
It's worth a fortune. They've *gotta* let us join the gang now!
I'll only be a minute, Joey. I forgot my phone.
Okay, Mom.

Hey, this is my old neighborhood. Turn left at the corner.
Keep going. See the fire plug?
It's the fourth house on the other side.
That's the house I grew up in.
STOP
Man, a lot of dark things went down in there.
Hold it! Did you hear that noise?
Hear what?
Someone's in the house, coming our way! *Turn off your light.*

Do it.
BLAM!
You idiot! It's a **woman!**
So what? Let's **go!**
That sounded like next door!
We'll check it out, Tim. You stay in the car. Anything can happen. If you see them, follow them, okay?
Okay!
Man, I left the stuff on the floor!
What? Go back and get it!
Wait for me!
Is that her car? It's still running...

Shots? Mom? Two guys with guns... what do I do?
The trunk! Hide in the trunk, quick!

Joey opens the latch, giving him access into the trunk.
I'm almost in... **help me God!** They'll kill me!

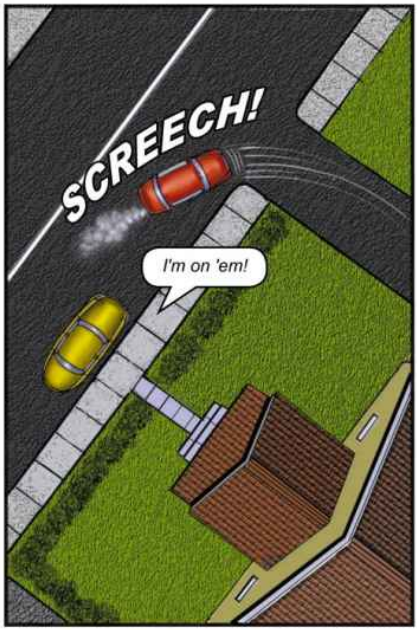

I got everything! I think the broad is dead!
Who cares?
Get in the car. I can hear a siren.

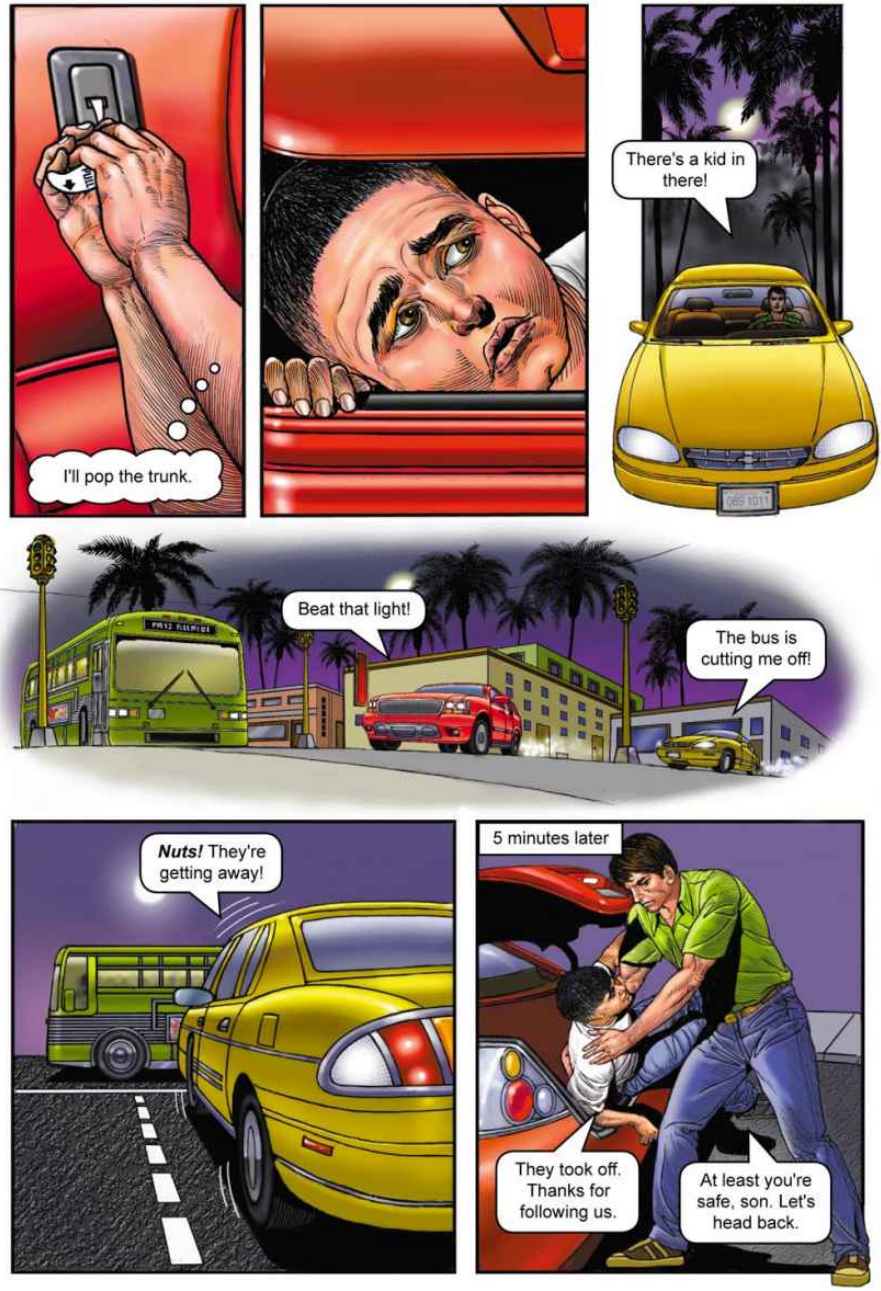
Check the car first, **idiot!** Someone might be in it. ***Hurry!***

I don't see anybody inside...
We'll get to our van and disappear.

We've **got** what we came for. Hang on. We're *outta* here!
Whew... ***that*** was a close one!

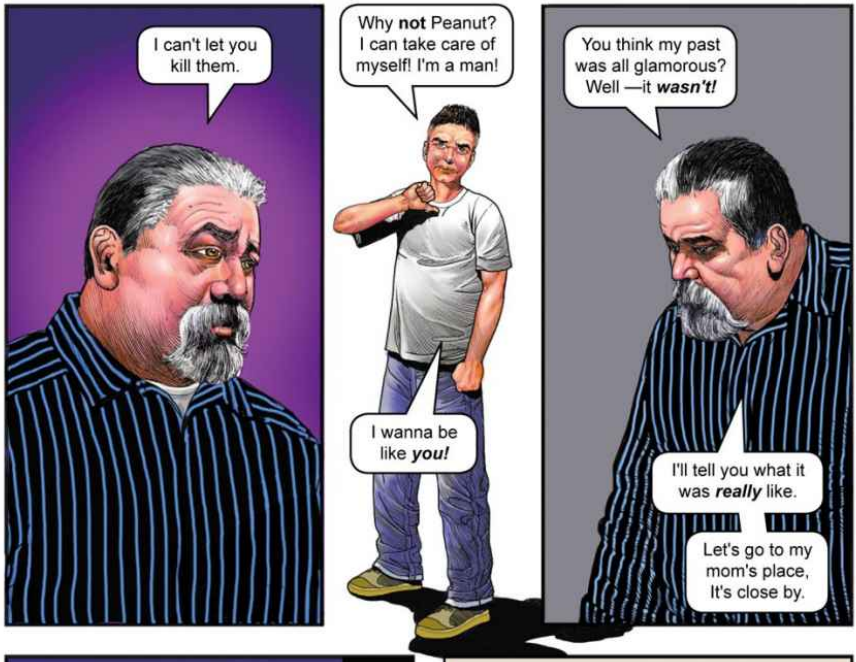
Help me... I've been shot!
Grab her... she's falling!
I'll call 911!

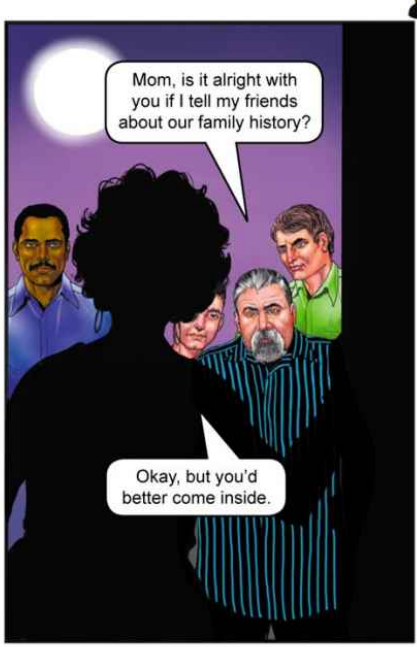

SCREECH!
I'm on 'em!


I'll pop the trunk.
There's a kid in there!
Beat that light!
The bus is cutting me off!
Nuts! They're getting away!
5 minutes later
They took off. Thanks for following us.
At least you're safe, son. Let's head back.

My mom, is she okay? Can I see her?
Only a flesh wound, Joey. She's at the hospital...
The Lord saved your mom, Joey.
She's worried about you...she wants to see you.
Wait a minute. I know who you are... **you're Peanut!** *Right?*
Man this is great! I'm talking to an OG*.
I know you... we ***all*** know who you are. Look, Peanut, you know everybody, right?
I want to kill the guys who shot my mom. Can you find out who did it?
What's that?
I can, except for one thing.

*Original gangster


I can't let you kill them.
Why **not** Peanut? I can take care of myself! I'm a man!
I wanna be like ***you!***
You think my past was all glamorous? Well —it ***wasn't!***
I'll tell you what it was ***really*** like.
Let's go to my mom's place, It's close by.



The "Black Angels" was started by Frank "Mosca" Castrejon and his homies, Joe, Gilbert and my dad, Lorenzo "Corky" Hernandez, and others.

Gangs in other barrios* knew our area was unprotected, so they would drive in, cause trouble and beat up our people —for no reason. So those friends decided to form their own gang. Frank was their motivator.

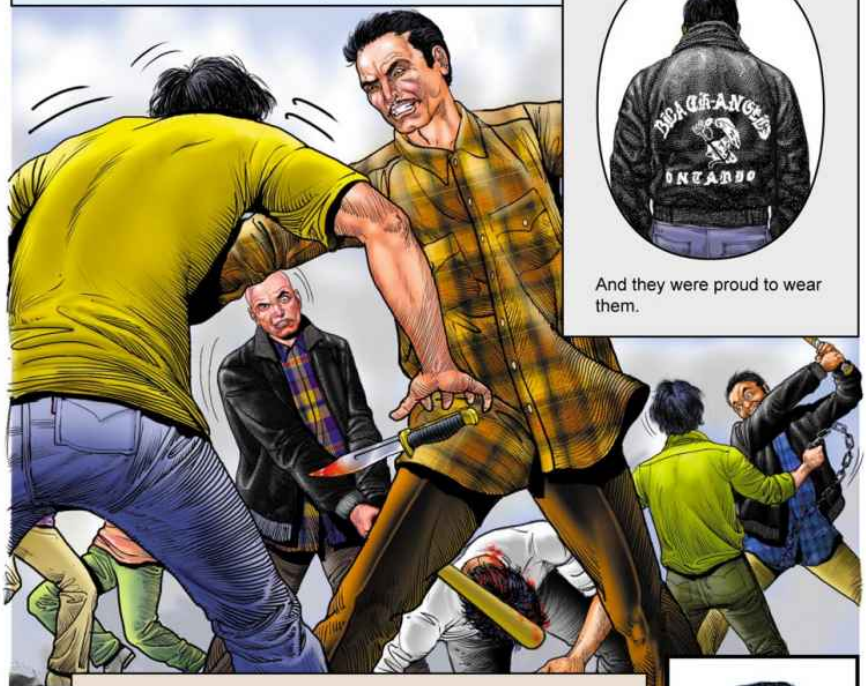
*Neighborhoods

Frank encouraged them to fight back. When the gangs came back, they were ready for them.

The "Black Angels" were started for protection, but they were out for revenge, as well. Their reputation grew pretty fast.

They put their gang's logo on their jackets.

And they were proud to wear them.



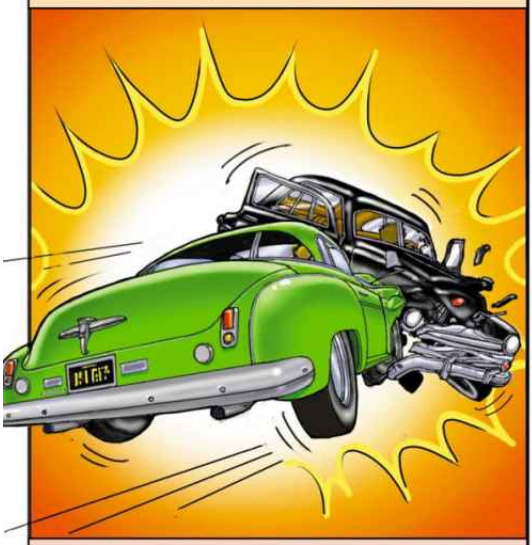
Corky joined the army and was stationed in Germany. When he came back to Ontario in the 50's, he fell right back into his old ways. He was big, 6'3" and 285 lbs and people feared and respected him. He was hassled by the law like everyone in the barrio was, but my father was smart —he ***never*** used drugs.

Corky was a diabetic who died of complications in 2000

My mom had known Corky since childhood. They had a summer fling in 1958, but everything changed when she got pregnant.

A few months into the pregnancy, Satan made his first attempt to kill me.

Mom was driving and was carrying me inside her.



Her car was hit in a traffic accident...

The steering wheel slammed into her stomach...

We made it through, but as a result I was born prematurely.

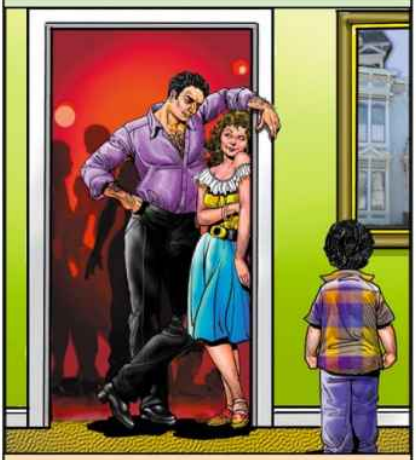
I was named Lorenzo Hernandez, after my father.

I was born on May 4th, 1959 —my parents never married.

I don't remember seeing my dad until I was five.

You see, Corky was raising another family in the barrio, but I had to grow up without a dad. I was hurt. I'm 52, and I ***still*** feel it, but they are my family and I love them.

Our house was always filled with friends, neighbors, and relatives.



One guy who knew my mom from high school caught her eye: *Freddy!* He stayed long enough to give my mother another son, my *brother* Anthony... then Freddy split.

Anthony Rangel was born July 21, 1962. He was my little brother and I protected him... He followed in my footsteps.

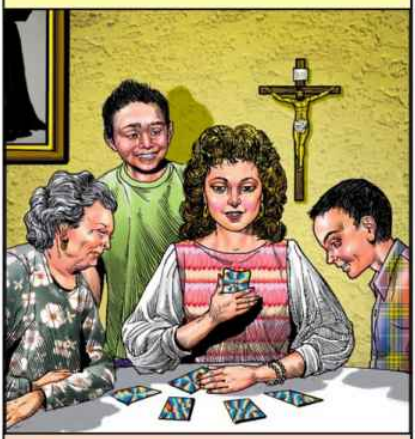
We didn't have a dad, so we looked to other men as our heroes —the Hell's Angels. We tried to make our jackets like theirs...

...And turn our tricycles into big Harley Davidson motorcycles.

More than anything we wanted to be like these road warriors.

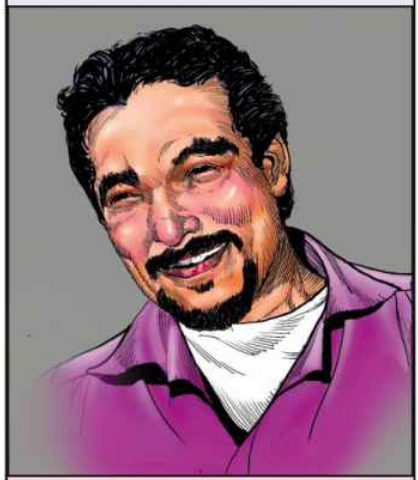
They were fierce, they were strong, and ***nobody*** told them what to do!

My family said we were Roman Catholics, but we only went to Church on holidays like Christmas and Easter. We **never** went to confession.



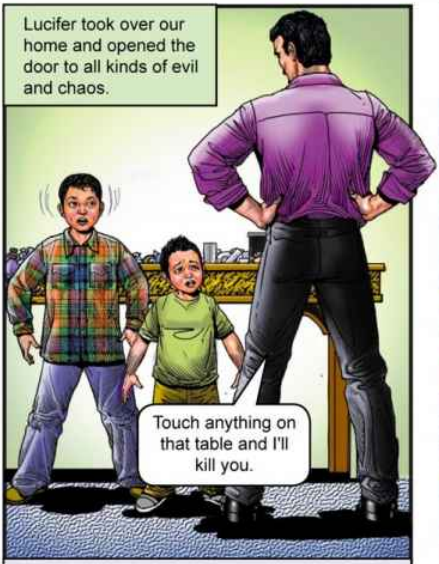
In our neighborhood people played around with Tarot Cards, fortune telling and sometimes dabbled with a Ouija Board —we all did— we thought it was fun.

But the fun stopped one night when mom brought home a scary new boyfriend.



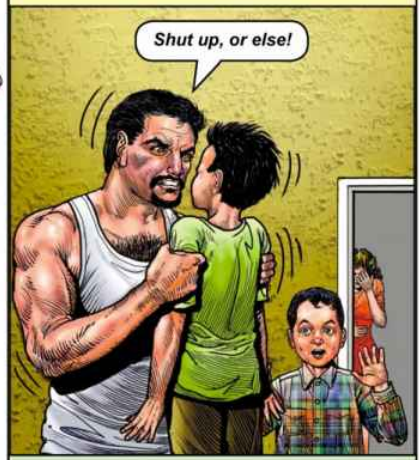
He was big, he was mean, and he was proud of his name —Lucifer. Our happy home wouldn't be happy anymore.

Lucifer took over our home and opened the door to all kinds of evil and chaos.



He hated us. We were scared of him, and that's just the way he liked it.

We saw stuff we never should have seen. On his good days he was cruel, but on his bad days, he got violent.



He would push us around and throw things. I think he beat Mom. She was trapped and cried a lot when we were in bed.

Evil surrounded Lucifer. It was spooky at night whenever he came to stay with us.

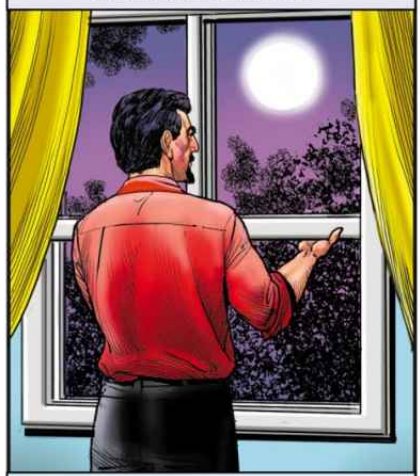
One night I saw a person without a face. Anthony woke up and saw it too.

It had no eyes, yet somehow it was staring back at us. We quickly ducked under the covers, shaking 'till we fell asleep.

Another night, a lady all in black stood crying at the foot of our bed.

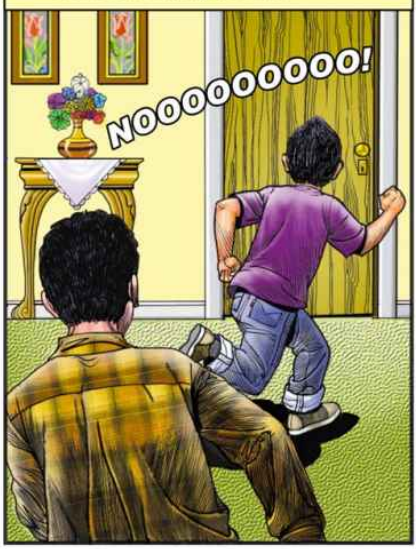
I was 9 years old then. I was petrified. I couldn't take my eyes off her. I had no idea what it meant.

But over time, I was strangely drawn to these dark forces.

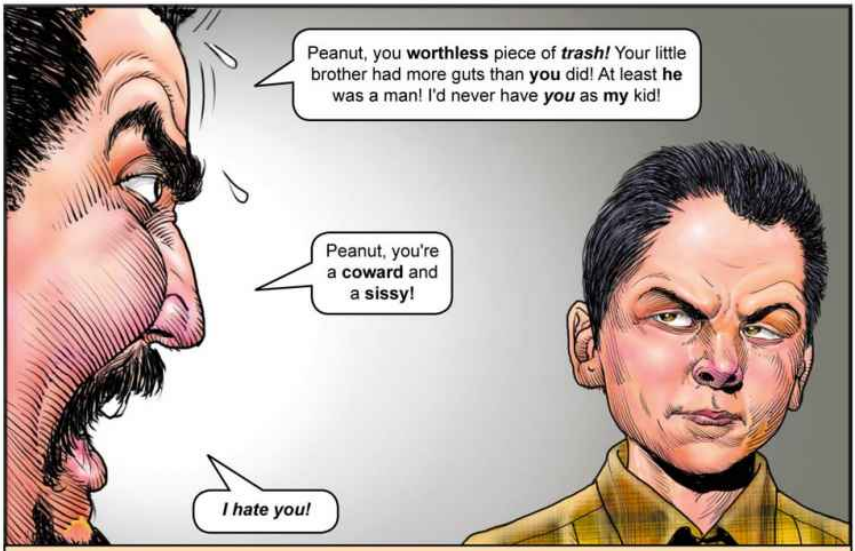


This only happened when Lucifer was around. He left for a while, and things got back to normal. But when he came back, things only got worse.

One night he really beat Mom. She was screaming and crying. Anthony ran to defend her. I was right behind.



Little Anthony slammed into him, pounding him with his fists.


Peanut, you **worthless** piece of ***trash!*** Your little brother had more guts than **you** did! At least **he** was a man! I'd never have ***you*** as **my** kid!
Peanut, you're a **coward** and a **sissy!**
I hate you!

Lucifer never showed love to anyone. He was running the show... for now. But little kids grow up —and they don't forget. Someday we'd get even.

Lucifer introduced us to the drug world.

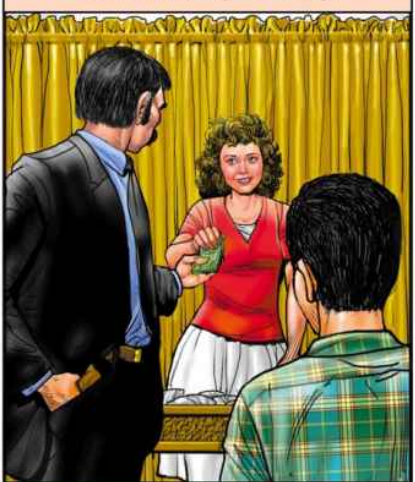
Strangers showed up at our door. They wore slick suits and carried briefcases.

We weren't stupid —we knew better.

They would empty their briefcases on the table. We were told ***never*** to touch what they put there.

Lucifer provided them with liquor, girls, and money.

Lucifer forced mom to sell dope. People would quietly come and go.



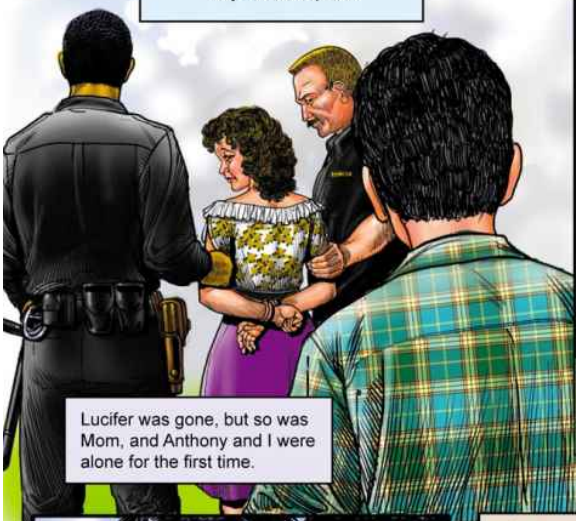
They were cautious, but I would pick up on things.

It all seemed normal to us.

Then one day:

I didn't see my mom for 4 years after that. The house had been raided. But Lucifer was nowhere to be found.

My life was never the same after that. It was like I'd become a 10-year-old orphan.



Mom ended up in the state prison for possession and sale of narcotics —thanks to Lucifer!

Lucifer was gone, but so was Mom, and Anthony and I were alone for the first time.

Grandma and Grandpa tried to fill in as parents, but they were already old and tired. There was only so much they could do.

On Sundays Grandpa would load us on a bus that came by.

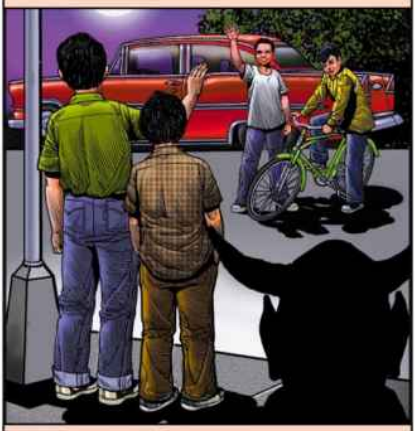
It drove around the neighborhood picking up kids and it would take us to a church a few blocks down.

God sent that little bus. This church was nothing like the Catholic church. They were happy, singing and talked about the Bible and Jesus.

God put the right people there to pray over us and minister to us. Despite all our trouble, God's hand was upon our lives.

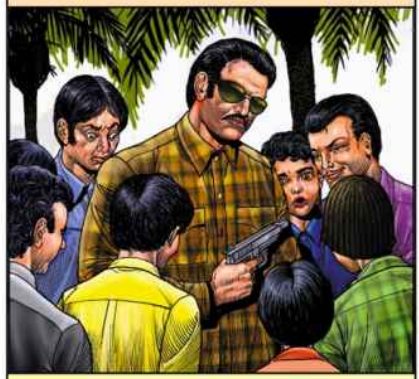
But Satan kept pulling us back into darkness to destroy us.

Our grandparents loved us. They did the best they could, but Anthony and I knew how to play them. We ran through the streets like we owned them.



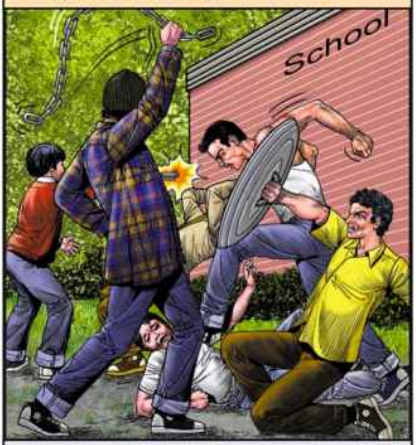
Day or night, we came and went whenever we wanted. We felt at home on the streets, and that fit right into the Devil's plans for us.

By the age of 10, we had a little crew. We smoked marijuana, drank and got into fist fights. We wanted to be like the big kids (14-18 years old) who fought with baseball bats, knives and guns.



My uncle and his friends were important men in our area. Frank, leader of the Black Angels, was there, so we hung around with them to make ourselves feel important.

For us, junior high and high school were a war zone. They locked down the high school whenever there was a riot. The lockers were removed because kids hid their weapons in them.

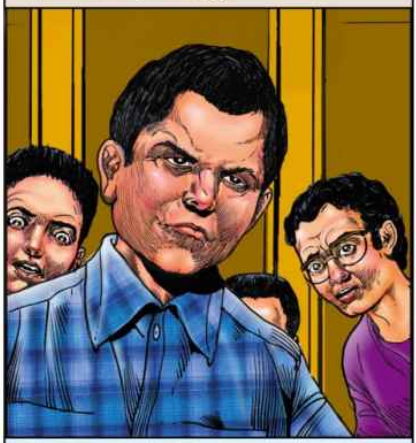


At 13, we were already moving into leadership of the Black Angels (BA's).

There were a lot of vacancies in the BA's. All the leaders were either dead or rotting in prison.

We just walked in and took over. Because of my reputation for fighting, I was made "sergeant of arms." There we were, with a stash of weapons, a gang over 60 strong, and a really bad attitude.

I was a bully in high school. I was filled with hatred and jealousy. Kids talked about their parents and gifts they got.

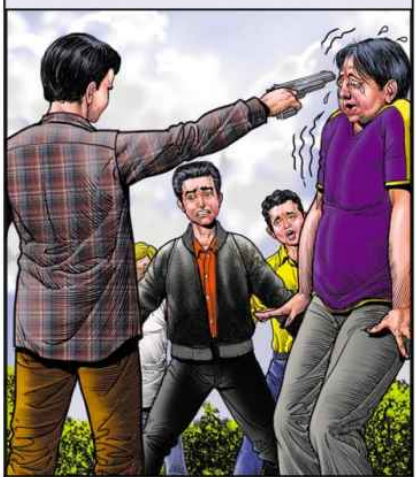


I had no father. No vacations. My mom was in prison. I never got presents —I was cheated. I felt like I was thrown under the bus. God was no longer in **my** thoughts.

At that time I had just started my sophomore year in high school. I got caught up in all the madness.

Gang violence was kicking up between different areas —guys would come from other high schools and we'd chase them out, and vice-versa. People were getting shot and some killed.

Anthony didn't hang out with us. He was with a younger gang, but he was just as tough as I was.

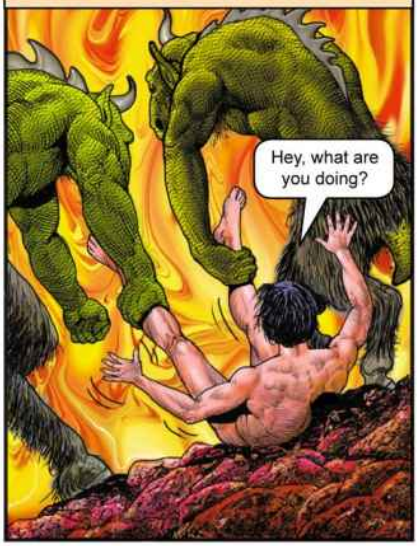


One night his crew crashed a party. Anthony was looking for trouble, and he found it —big time. A fight broke out.

Then suddenly someone shot Anthony in the stomach with a shotgun.

At the hospital, Anthony was pronounced dead. But actually, his soul came out of his body. This is what Anthony told me happened while he was dead:

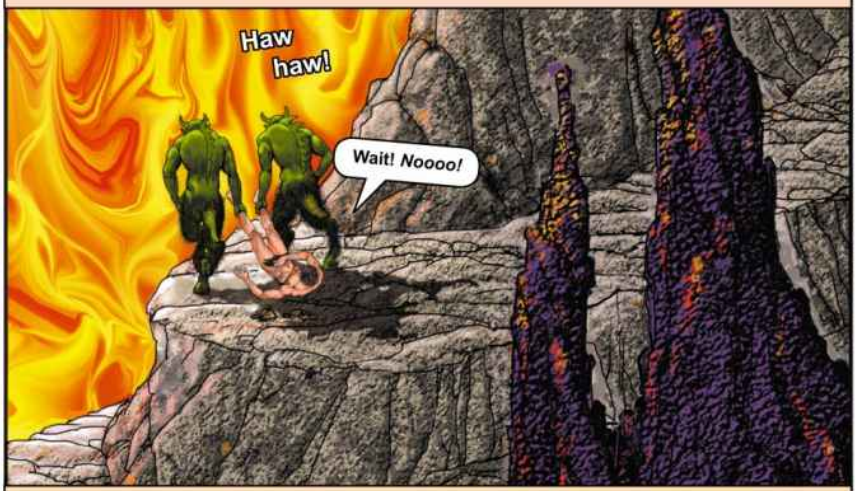
He said "I woke up and two big creatures were dragging me by my ankles downhill on a dirt road."



"They didn't answer. They just looked at me and laughed. All around me I could see fire."

"I felt like I was burning up. This was no dream. I was never more scared."

"We were going down into a large, dark pit. As we went deeper, the fire got closer and closer."

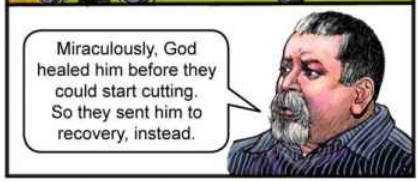


"They were pulling me down into hell. I couldn't stop them, and they kept laughing. I knew I was dead and lost forever —no hope and no way out. Up in the hospital, the doctors kept using the defibrillator on my flatlined heart. All of a sudden, everything vanished. I was back in the hospital. That was so close. That was the scariest and worst moment of my life."

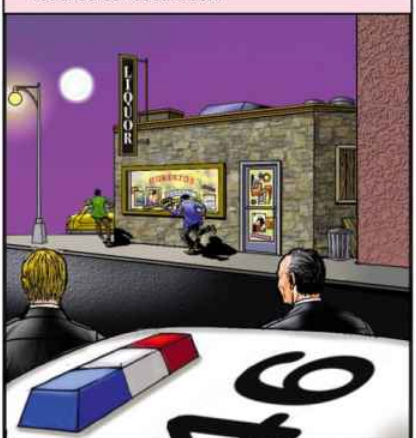
"I was in a hospital bed with a breathing tube. I was on life support and dying of thirst."

"I asked a buddy for a can of punch. As he poured it down my throat next to my breathing tube, I started choking and went code blue."

"The next thing I knew I was on a gurney heading for surgery. While waiting, God sent an old family friend to urge me to receive Jesus as my Saviour. Thank God, I did!"



Anthony's near death demanded payback! I was fuming with hatred! I knew who did it, and we were going after him, but we never reached our destination.



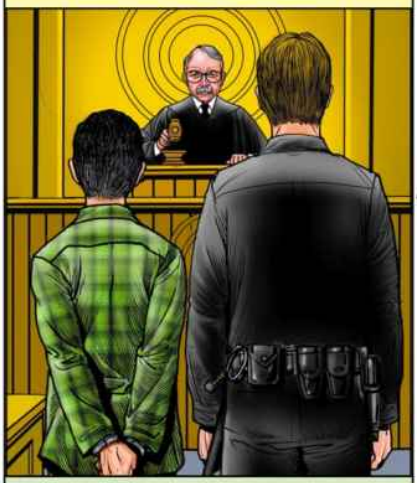
We stopped at a liquor store and robbed it. The clerk was shot and we ran out of the store, but a sheriff was just across the street!

We tore out of there, but the sheriff was right behind. We got into a high speed shootout.

Suddenly we slammed on the brakes. They blocked us between police cars. We were trapped.

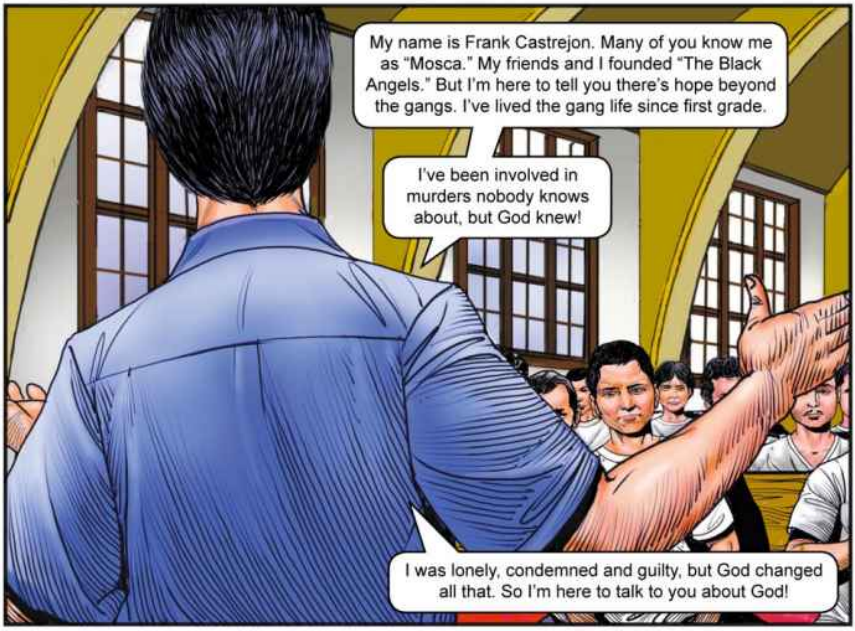
The sheriff took one look at me and said:

I was only 15, and here I was getting booked for armed robbery and attempted murder. I was sent to the California Youth Authority.



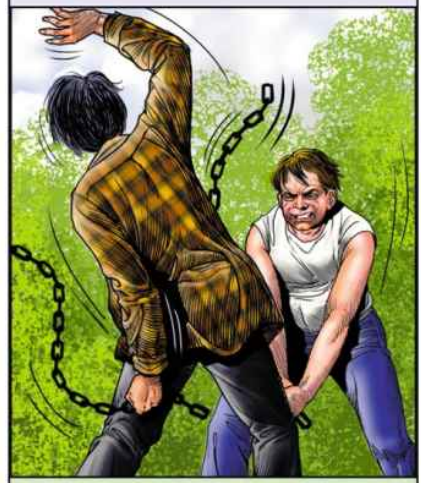
The psychiatrist checked me out. He said I was a walking time bomb.

I avoided chapel. Then one day:


My name is Frank Castrejon. Many of you know me as "Mosca." My friends and I founded "The Black Angels." But I'm here to tell you there's hope beyond the gangs. I've lived the gang life since first grade.
I've been involved in murders nobody knows about, but God knew!
I was lonely, condemned and guilty, but God changed all that. So I'm here to talk to you about God!

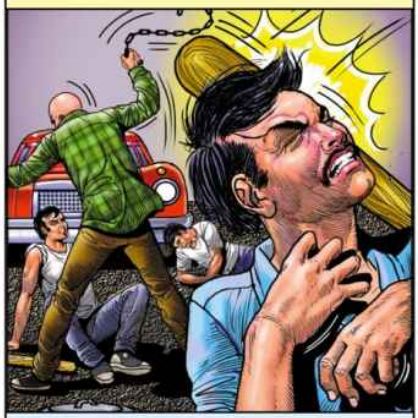
I never had a mom, my dad was a drunk... until he met Minnie. My stepmom cleaned him up...
And he really loved her! But she was black, and all the guys made fun of me for it.
Hatred rose in my heart.

I wanted to get back at them so I formed a gang called "The Black Hand!" We fought using *"la cadena"* and *"la patada"* —chains and kicking.



I began to fight back. I joined with gangs on the street and came home late... and I was only 8!

When we moved from Brawley to Ontario in 1947 there was no gang in our barrio. The area gangs knew that, so they would drive in without permission and beat up our people.



My brothers and I told our friends "We're not gonna let them come in anymore." So in 1954, me and a few guys formed our own gang, "The Black Angels."

Starting with a crew of five, we began hitting back into the other gang's areas. We weren't playing around.

We used chains and clubs and had little rifles in our cars. Some in those areas ended up in the hospital, others died.

You think revenge made me feel better? It didn't, so at 16 years old I started using heroin.

But that didn't do it. I got married. I had kids, thinking I'd change. Nope. I was drunk, high and violent at times —and totally empty inside. Something had to change!

Finally my past caught up with me, and on Christmas day 1974, I was a heroin addict, stuck in jail. I had just taken my last dose of methadone... and was scared to death I'd kick.*

God, I don't know you, but I want to!

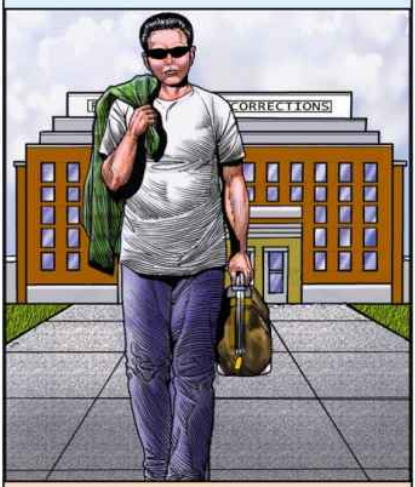
I've tried everything, but it's failed — alcohol, drugs, being with the homeboys.

But I heard your Son, Jesus, took my place, died for my sins, and rose from the dead. Lord, I believe you! Come into my life and help me... save me Lord!

I began a new, drug-free life in Christ†, but it wasn't easy.

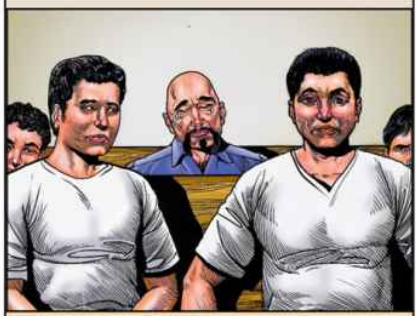
*Methadone can cause violent withdrawals from heroin use.
†See 2 Corinthians 5:17

When I got out, it was a struggle. I had no foundation in the Bible and nobody to take me under his wing.



And I started to mess up, but God sent helpers through Jericho House and Sonny Navarro.

Now I'm learning the Bible and sharing my testimony. Guys, there is hope. There is a way —and **Jesus** is the way.

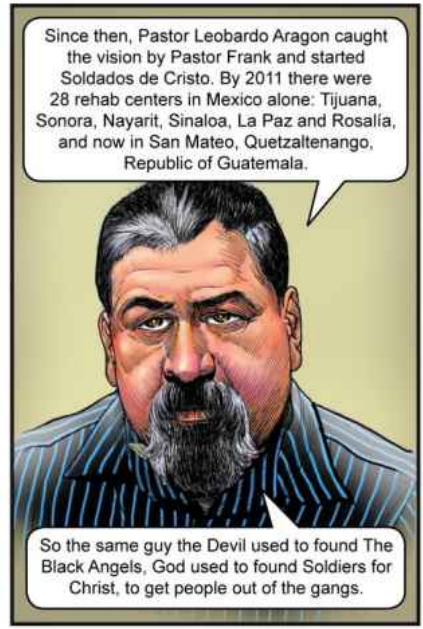


"That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved."
Romans 10:9

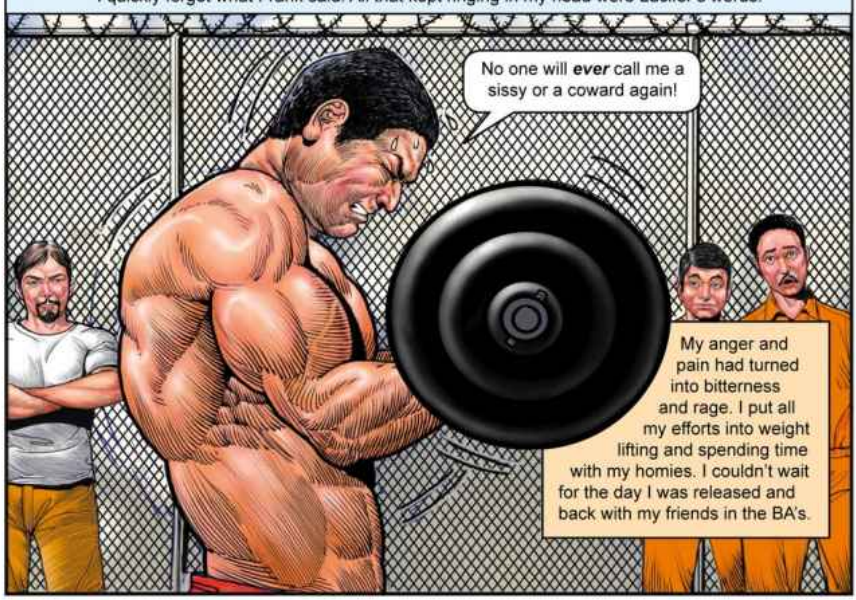
Some of my friends got saved that day, but not me. Not yet...

Back in that jail cell in 1974, God gave Frank a vision. He saw fully outfitted soldiers in a circle, holding hands, but he had no idea why. Later, he realized they were praying for the lost. So in 1978 Frank founded Soldiers for Christ —and before long the very building where I hid my guns became his church!

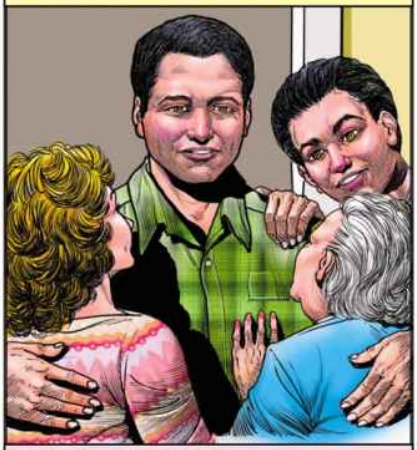
In 1979 he and his wife founded a women's home in Guasti. Many men and women have been changed by the word of God in these two ministries.


Since then, Pastor Leobardo Aragon caught the vision by Pastor Frank and started Soldados de Cristo. By 2011 there were 28 rehab centers in Mexico alone: Tijuana, Sonora, Nayarit, Sinaloa, La Paz and Rosalía, and now in San Mateo, Quetzaltenango, Republic of Guatemala.
So the same guy the Devil used to found The Black Angels, God used to found Soldiers for Christ, to get people out of the gangs.

I quickly forgot what Frank said. All that kept ringing in my head were Lucifer's words:


No one will ever call me a sissy or a coward again!
My anger and pain had turned into bitterness and rage. I put all my efforts into weight lifting and spending time with my homies. I couldn't wait for the day I was released and back with my friends in the BA's.

When I got home, my Mom was waiting. It was like going back were you left off.

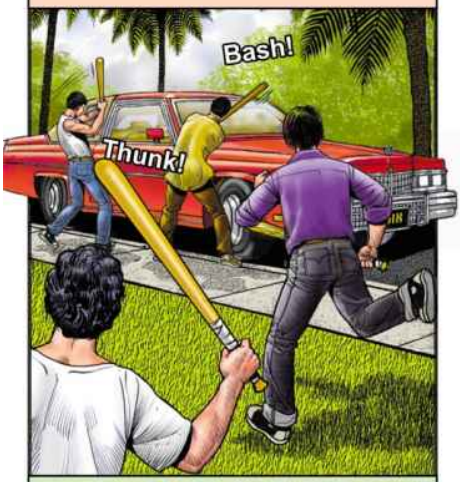


It's always the same. People wait for you to come back, then they welcome you with open arms, then the circle of drinking, drugs and violence starts all over again.

Lucifer tried to start up where he left off, as well. One day he drove up to our home and tried to waltz back in and take control. Mom wanted nothing to do with him.

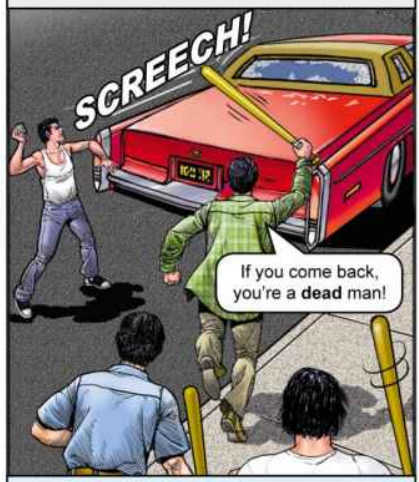
That was our license to get rid of him.

Our house was full of teens. Quietly, Anthony gave the order to get rid of Lucifer.



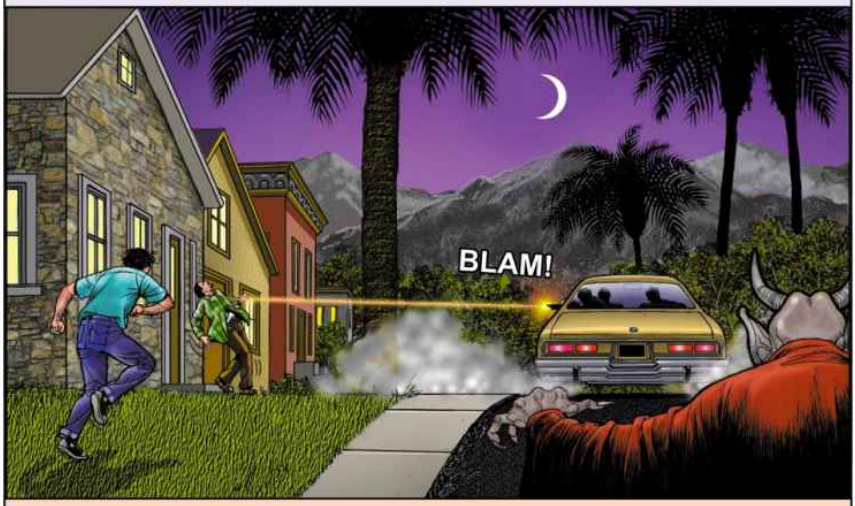
The kids grabbed baseball bats out of their trunks and started attacking Lucifer's car. He was totally caught off-guard!

A frightened Lucifer tore out of there, his rear and two back side windows bashed out.



He never came back. That was the end of Lucifer, but the big Lucifer (the Devil) was only getting started.

The 80's were a time of increasing hostility. Gang fights had escalated into turf wars. No place was safe in the barrios. One night, the president of the Black Angels was shot to death in a drive-by.



I was forced to replace him as president. Now I was a marked man. The BA's had grown to a couple hundred, but in one year alone, around 30 people had died in gangland shootings.

The least safe place to be was at a party.

After Anthony's high school graduation he was attacked by one gang. When he got home, he was shot 10 times by a .22 semiautomatic in front of our mom's house —by another gang in another drive-by.

One round hit a lung. He went down and again was pronounced dead. But ***this*** time...

Instead of hell, he said he saw a big white beautiful cloud with a stairway... he felt something he never felt before —real peace. He didn't want to come back.

Suddenly he awakened on the surgery table. Later God brought him back a third time. He wanted Anthony alive —even with bullets still in him! Today he serves God with his family and is a diesel mechanic. God made something out of his life.

Now that our president was dead, all the gang members turned to me.

I was a fighter, but I never wanted to lead. I had walked into a hornet's nest. Deaths in the area became a daily occurrence. Even the papers stopped covering most Mexican gang-related deaths. It became an invisible war throughout Southern California.

Bodies were found in the local vineyards, between the rows of grapes, and in fields near the airport.

Many a party would end with one or two —as many as seven dead. Death was in the atmosphere in those days.

I had always hated heroin and despised the losers addicted to it. They were unreliable and unable to come when the gang needed help.

How could anybody be stupid enough to get hooked on heroin?

I had reached the top, but it wasn't what I thought it would be. My life was still empty —and I was a sitting duck.

I went to my old friend, who was now called "Pastor Frank." I could see what Frank had was real —and I wanted it.

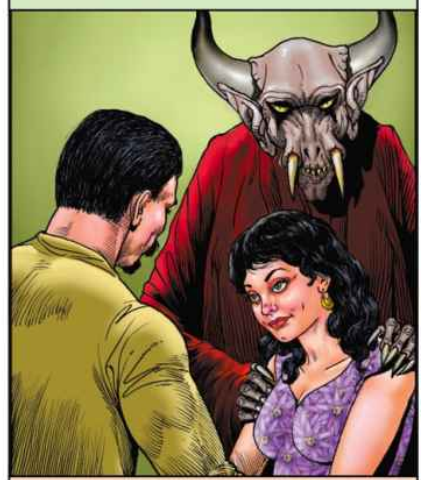
Are you tired of going into prison? Get on your knees and pray this from your heart:
"Father, I believe in Jesus. I believe Jesus died for my sins. I confess it with my mouth and believe it with my heart, that God hath raised Him from the dead."*

*See Romans 10:9

I prayed, and it felt like God took out my heart of stone, and replaced it with a heart of flesh.

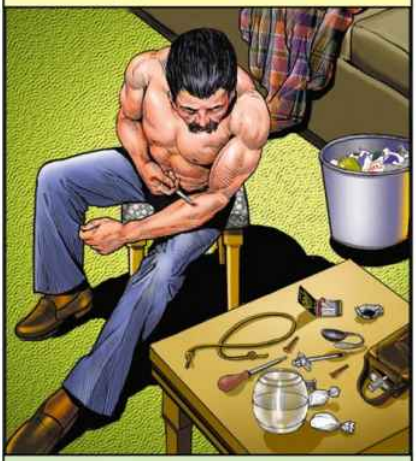
I followed with Frank a while, but I wasn't ready to make the full commitment that Pastor Frank had, and soon I was tempted to fill the hole in my life another way. My greatest weakness...

She came into my life, and all I could think about was how to please her. I had heard there was a way to enhance my love life, and feel a pleasure I had never known.



Heroin!

It only took a little at first, but when it wears off, an evil spirit follows you, demanding more in a never-ending cycle.



Now I had to sell heroin, so I could buy things to please my girl —and to support my habit. I was hooked on both of them.

Then the bomb fell.

My bubble burst —She tore out my heart and I dumped her. Now all I had left was my heroin, but who was I kidding? Heroin had ***me*** —*for 15 long years.*

I was worthless. I was everything I had despised. All I cared about was shooting up. Eventually the veins in my body collapsed and I shot it straight into my skin, hoping to get high on some of it —if only for an instant.

This stuff was killing me. It was black tar heroin. My arms were covered with abscesses the size of eggs.

They were swollen up 3 times their normal size. I could hardly move them

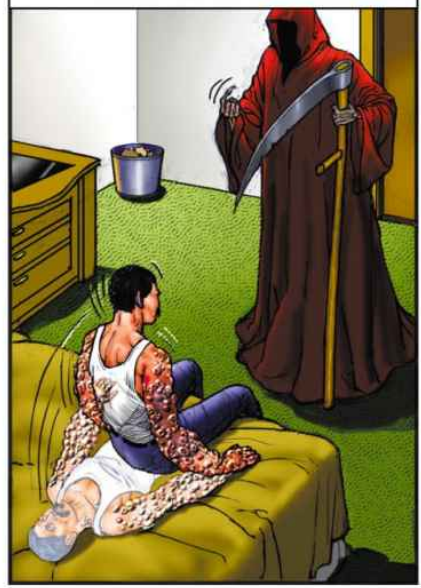
The only thing that could relieve my agony was death —and it was waiting around the corner.

Finally the day arrived. Satan came to collect. The abscesses in my arms were filled with pus and poison.

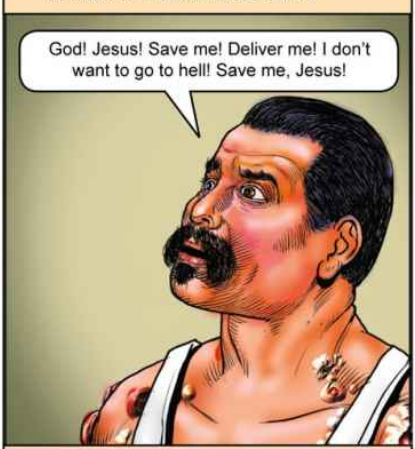
Suddenly I fell backwards as if dead. I was freezing cold and unable to move. And yet I could sense everything in the room.

And all around me was the smell of sulphur.

Satan had come to collect my soul.



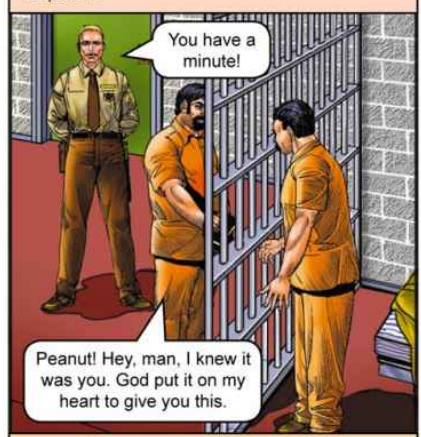
I was dying, and only one person could deliver me: The Lord Jesus Christ.



And He did! I felt my body getting warm, and I was able to move again. God had forgiven my sins and now delivered me from an early grave.

But I still needed to pay for my crimes on earth.

I entered into prison at Tehachapi in 1996 and I needed a Bible. But before I could submit my request...

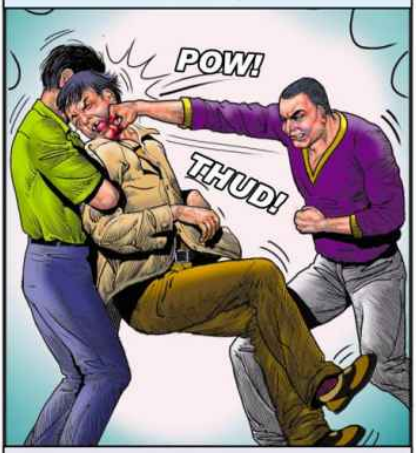


God heard my prayer, even before I had asked for it.

"...for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him." Matthew 6:8

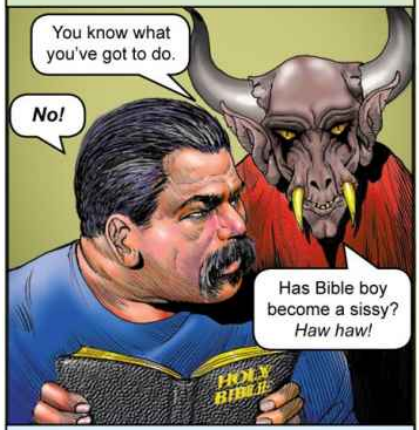
For the next few years I kept growing in Christ. I missed every fight, and rejected every drug, and people knew my faith was for real, but I knew that one day that faith would be tested.

It came in the form of a phone call. Satan struck —not at me, but at my young son.

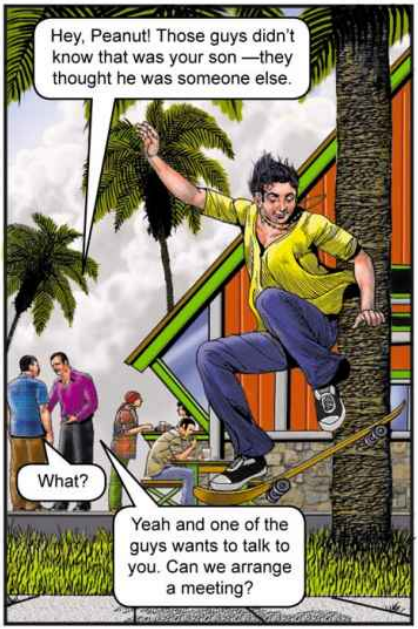


He was jumped by two big young men as he walked home from junior high school.

A fiery rage rose in my heart. I knew that all I had to do was speak the word, and his attackers would be dead.

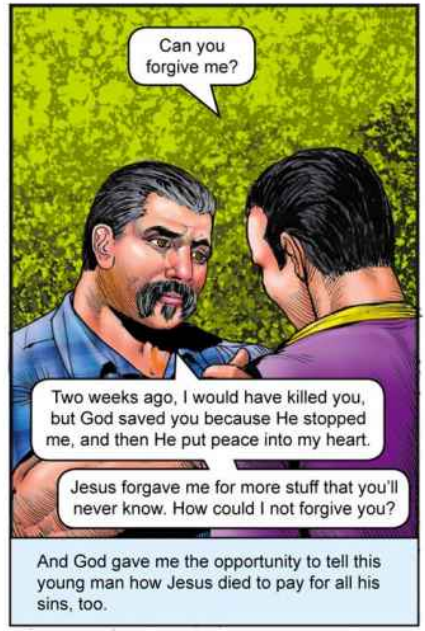


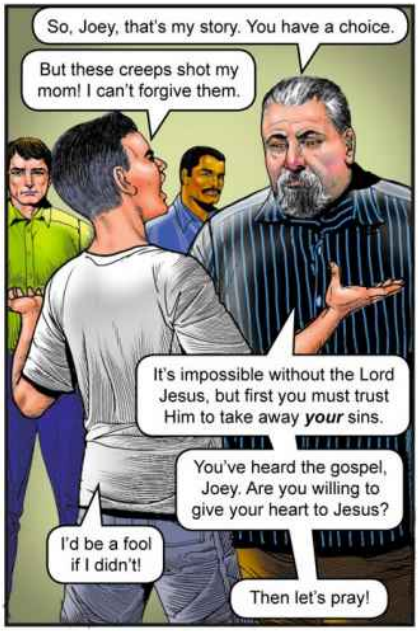
It took two weeks of prayer and Bible reading for the Lord to calm me down.


Hey, Peanut! Those guys didn't know that was your son —they thought he was someone else.
What?
Yeah and one of the guys wants to talk to you. Can we arrange a meeting?

But by this time, I was ready for him.

H-hey, Peanut? Man, if I knew it was your family, I would have **never** hit your son.
I'm sorry, man! I thought he was someone else. I messed up! It was a big mistake... I'm sorry, Man.
It's okay. Come here!


Can you forgive me?
Two weeks ago, I would have killed you, but God saved you because He stopped me, and then He put peace into my heart.
Jesus forgave me for more stuff that you'll never know. How could I not forgive you?
And God gave me the opportunity to tell this young man how Jesus died to pay for all his sins, too.


So, Joey, that's my story. You have a choice.
But these creeps shot my mom! I can't forgive them.
It's impossible without the Lord Jesus, but first you must trust Him to take away **your** sins.
You've heard the gospel, Joey. Are you willing to give your heart to Jesus?
I'd be a fool if I didn't!
Then let's pray!

Jesus, You're the only one I can trust. I want to forgive them, but I can't. I believe You died for my sins. Please come into my heart, so I can forgive these guys. I really need Your help, Lord. Thank you, God.
You've taken the right first step, Joey.
Now let's get you in contact with a church that can help you to grow in Christ.
"Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." 2 Corinthians 5:17

Joey could have spent his life in hate, seeking revenge, but there's no peace in your heart in gangs, drugs or sex. You must forgive your enemies. Believe on Jesus, who shed His blood on the cross to forgive all our sins,* and receive Him in your heart.** He will give you the power to forgive your enemies, and a peace you've never known.

*Revelation 1:5
**John 1:12
†2 Corinthians 6:2

Where are they now?

Lorenzo Hernandez (Peanut) visits the prisons and ministers to the inmates, sharing the love of the Lord Jesus Christ, winning souls for God's kingdom.

Anthony Rangel (Kookie) ministers in Fresno, California, winning souls to Christ. He gives all the glory and praise to the Lord Jesus Christ for saving him from death.

Albert Roman Sr. (Spooky) was saved in 1991. He ministers with Lorenzo and has a writing ministry to inmates.

THE BIBLE SAYS THERE'S ONLY ONE WAY TO HEAVEN!

Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me." (John 14:6)

NOBODY ELSE CAN SAVE YOU. TRUST JESUS TODAY!

1. Admit you are a sinner.
2. Be willing to turn from sin (repent).
3. Believe that Jesus Christ died for you, was buried and rose from the dead.
4. Through prayer, invite Jesus into your heart to become your personal Saviour.

WHAT TO PRAY

Dear God, I am a sinner and need forgiveness. I believe that Jesus Christ shed His precious blood and died for my sin. I am willing to turn from sin. I now invite Christ to come into my heart as my personal Saviour.

Did you accept Jesus Christ as your own personal Saviour? Yes ☐ No ☐

Date_____

If your answer was yes, then this is just the beginning of a wonderful new life with Christ. Now:

1. Read your Bible (KJV) every day to get to know Christ better.
2. Pray to God every day (in your own words).
3. Be baptized, worship, fellowship, and serve with Christians in a church where Christ is preached and the Bible is the final authority.
4. Tell others about Christ.